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Ministry of Forests

BIOLOGISTS' ACCREDITATION TO IMPROVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

VICTORIA – The government has introduced legislation to establish a College of Applied Biology – the first of its kind in Canada – designed to improve forest management by registering biologists and holding them accountable for their work, said Forests Minister Michael de Jong.

"As part of our New Era commitment to a workable results-based code, we want to make sure resource management professionals are providing strong, science-based advice to meet the standards in place," said de Jong. "Until now, there's been no consistent accreditation for resource management professionals. This act holds biologists accountable for their work and will help give the public confidence in decisions that are made."

Under the Forest and Range Practices Act, resource management professionals will have increased responsibility for protecting the environment. With the new College of Applied Biology Act, British Columbia will have greater ability than anywhere else in Canada to sanction biologists for improper conduct.

The act establishes a College of Applied Biology to oversee the profession of applied biology. The college will protect the public interest by:

- Preserving and protecting the scientific methods and principles that are the foundation of the applied biological sciences.
- Upholding the principles of stewardship of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and biological resources.
- Ensuring the integrity, objectivity and expertise of its members.

"This legislation is long overdue and gives biologists the recognition they have so clearly earned," said Mel Kotyk, president of the Association of Professional Biologists. "I expect the act will also give the public greater confidence that advice provided by professional biologists is scientifically based."

The college will set strict standards of conduct, including a code of ethics; establish education programs; and assess the performance of members through audits and practice reviews. The discipline processes under the act are comprehensive and include penalties of up to $10,000 for members found guilty of misconduct.

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Visit the province's Web site at http://www.gov.bc.ca/ for online information and services.

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